



Scripture: Matthew 6:1-4

Subject: Part 32 - Giving in the Kingdom

*“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.*”

Jesus in His sermon on the Mount that day, set a standard that was unheard of to the people of His day. Yes, they had a religion; they thought it was biblical, they worshipped the one true living God. It was at least sophisticated and unquestionably complex, but unfortunately, it was substandard. It didn't make it God's standard. Their theology was inadequate.

And we saw that in chapter 5 as Jesus emphasis was on moral righteousness in relation to a heart issue because they had the wrong theology about how to approach God, the wrong doctrine about hate, anger, murder, divorce, swearing, telling lies, taking oaths, even about love. And he re-established God's standards. But in this chapter, chapter 6, He deals with outward righteousness as it pertains to others as they had the wrong theology and approach towards things in life.

Jesus is going to address broad themes of worship in verses 1 through 18, wealth in verses 19 through 34 and our walk as citizens in His kingdom in Chapter 7 verses 1 through 12. So *Why does Jesus address these issues?* Remember the theme throughout chapter 5 into Chapter 7, is righteousness. It isn't just the things that we do on the outside but the reality of who we are on the inside that's important. Jesus will begin with worship because worship is a word that we use to describe our friendship and our relationship to God.

The three illustrations that the Lord brings before us in verses 1 to 18 deals with giving, praying and fasting. All are related to our outward expression of righteousness. Giving deals with others, praying is our dealing with God and fasting deals with ourselves and mortification of the flesh. In other words, what others see, what we believe and how we express this towards all, should be coming from the depths of a pure heart and not hypocrisy. For example our humility and generosity and feelings towards all of mankind should be done from a pure heart. Religion, that is, true religion that James speaks of, which is faith, is always towards God, but it also expresses itself in good works which ought to be done without show or fanfare or another way of saying it, without hypocrisy.

The first element Jesus addresses is about giving in **Verse 1**.

Clearly what we do matters to God. In these verses Jesus doesn't make an argument about giving, praying and fasting. What he will do is, he will address the issue of motives. *What motivates you? What are the motives behind these disciplines?* Because, again the point that is being made is your motives matter to God. You might be thinking, well, *"isn't it good enough to just drop an envelope on occasion in the offering box, pray on occasion, resist an extra designer coffee drink in order to help out some worthwhile project?"* That's actually not what he's talking about.

Jesus begins with a warning and by the way, when you read the New Testament, whenever He begins a conversation with the two words 'Take Heed', it means, I need to warn you. This warning is for you and I even today, *but are we going to adhere to it? Will we take it seriously?*

The Jewish system had veered away from the clear teaching of God. The humility, humbleness, meekness had gone, it had become a sham in many ways for most of the Jewish people, and what they did and said was more about themselves than God. Their religion was mostly an act, and a mockery of God's revealed way for His people.

From Genesis to Revelation hypocrites are mentioned, those who play acted for personal gain and self motivation. Cain was the first, Genesis 4:5-8, he wanted to please God on his terms by substituting worship with a sacrifice unwanted by God. When he was unmasked, his anger erupted and he took it out on Able who worshipped God correctly.

Absalom hypocritically vowed allegiance to his father David the king while plotting to overthrow the regime as we find in 2 Samuel 15:7-10. The supreme hypocrite was Judas Iscariot who betrayed the Lord.

When we come to the early church, we find such hypocrisy there also. Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-10). Hypocrisy in the church today is still alive and active, and it will be till the end. Paul reminds us of this very fact when writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:1-2.

*“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup> speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron”.*

If what we are doing, whatever that might be, is simply for show then it is dangerous, we are in danger, as it falls into the category of what we are looking at. Outside of idolatry, the greatest sin both in Judah and Israel, was in fact hypocritical religion in which they had turned true worship of God into a mockery. Isaiah said the following in Isaiah 1:11.

*To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?” Says the LORD. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats.*

Stay in Isaiah 1 and read on to verses 13 through to 18. We find there that the Lord continued to show His displeasure in all of the other sacrifices which had been prescribed by God Himself because He wanted purity and righteousness not just going through the motions of rituals. God made similar calls at different times to His people to replace superficial ceremonies with genuine righteousness, for instance, Micah 6:8. Even in the oldest book of the Bible, the book of Job, we read the following in chapter 8:13,

*So are the paths of all who forget God; And the hope of the hypocrite shall perish.*

And also in chapter 36:13 *“But the hypocrites in heart store up wrath; They do not cry for help when He binds them.*

On one occasion when Jesus spoke to these religious in Mark 7:6-7, He said to them.

*“He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honours Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. ’ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’*

Jesus said “beware” which means to take hold of something and pay attention to it, especially in the sense of being on guard. The warning was not against their religious activity but against how they went about it, with such pride and confidence. The fact that they loved to be noticed is very telling. We would be right to call them actors. They were performing to please other ignorant people and fellow hypocrites. They were out to impress rather than serve God. It was all for show there was no real spiritual basis at all. Jesus assures us that such religion, and there is a lot of it today, will never qualify a person for the kingdom of God.

When we read verse 1 - it is not therefore a warning against giving. We read verses where God prefers us to give and be obedient rather than ritual ceremonies. But just as empty ritual is not pleasing to God, so too, giving has no spiritual value whatsoever if it's motivated by pride, if it's motivated by self-confidence, or motivated by theatrics. Giving is unacceptable and worthless if it's done to bring attention to yourself, which in and of itself, is a different message than what most of us hear.

*How many times have you been in a church where the person said I don't care what's motivating you, we're suffering here, we're struggling, reach into your wallet and give before God.? No, this type of giving is useless for the giver. The issue has to come from your heart. Would there be a temporary value? Perhaps. Will there be an eternal value? Not at all, So Jesus says, give but without hypocrisy. What most seem to miss which is the important thing is that we ought to give not the material things but our heart. if God has our heart he has everything.*

As we move on to **Verse 2** Jesus actually uses the word “hypocrite” which has its roots in acting when actors would have worn a mask portraying in an exaggerated way, the role of whomever they were seeking to portray.

One of the early church father said the following that is very telling,

***“The love of honour is the deadly bane of true piety. Other vices bring forth evil works but this brings forth good works in an evil way. Hypocrisy is so dangerous because it is so deceptive. It uses things that are basically good, for purposes that are evil.”***

Charitable deeds is also translated as the word “alms” which literally refers to any act of mercy or pity, but it came to be used primarily for giving money, but could include food, or clothing to the poor. It is where we get our English word charity from.

Jesus expected His followers to give “alms” because Jesus said ***‘Therefore, when you do a charitable deed.’*** It’s a matter of when, not a matter of if. God expects us to do good things. Christians do good deeds. They participate in acts of mercy, pity, and compassion, not just good intentions or having warm feelings of pity that never find practical expression. But we are not to do our good deeds like the hypocrites; our giving is to be done in the right way.

God has always delighted in acts of mercy and kindness, and generosity, we know this from His word, for example, Leviticus 25:35 (1). This giving went beyond His own people it was to reach out to others, but never at the expense of the household of faith.

Jesus and the disciples had their own money bag from which they gave offerings to the poor as we see in John 13:29 ***“For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, “Buy those things we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor.”***

So this verse is not about withholding charitable deeds, but seeking recognition when you do. And recognition provides fuel for hypocrisy. This kind of giving is giving in the wrong spirit that is evil, just as the scribes and Pharisees gave to bring honour to themselves, not to serve others and honour God.

The giving of “alms” had been carried to the extreme by rabbinical tradition for gaining recognition and for selfish gain. In the Jewish apocryphal books you can read such things as

***“it is better to give charity than to lay up gold. For charity will save a man from death; it will expiate any sin”*** (Tobit 12:8) and we also read in the book entitled ‘The Wisdom of Sirach’ 3:30, ***“as water quenches a flaming fire, so charity will atone for sin”***. Consequently many Jews believed that the rich had a better chance to be saved, because they could buy their way into Heaven. This same principle is found in traditional Catholic dogma. Pope Leo the great (400-461AD) declared, ***“by prayer we seek to appease God, by fasting we extinguish the lust of the flesh, and by alms we redeem our sins”***

Just as a sympathetic feeling does not help someone in need, unless something is given to elevate that need in some way, no spiritual blessing or benefit can be imparted simply by what you give, the same goes for whatever act of charity or good work that is done cannot atone for sin. There is a very interesting item in Edersheim’s ‘*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*’ which reads as follows -

***“It is said that there was a special, out-of-the-way place in the Temple where shy, humble Jews could leave their gifts without being noticed. Another place nearby was provided for the shy poor, who did not want to be seen asking for help. Here they would come and take what they needed. The name of the place was the Chamber of the Silent. People gave and people were helped, but no one knew the identities of either group.”***

But it is said, as the years went on, the Pharisees decided it wasn't practical to always go to the temple and go to the silent chamber, but they still wanted to do their duty. So, some have suggested that they would tie a small brass or silver trumpet to their belt and they would hang it on their outer garment. They then would blow that trumpet so that the poor would gather. *Did that really happen?* I don't know, but, I do know the point. The point is that all of a sudden now generosity and giving loses its practical meaning because now instead of honouring God, the point became to honour yourself.

The reward they wanted they got there and then, which was recognition, gratitude, respect and praise, and were honoured by men and that became their reward in full. When Jesus says assuredly ‘*I say to you they have their reward*’, it means that they received payment and full glory from men. Our gifts are not to secure the respect and admiration of the people who are around us.

*And so the bigger question becomes whose attention do you really crave? Whose attention do you crave from men or from God?*

As we come to verses 3 and 4, Jesus turns our attention to God's standard of giving, the practice as well as the reward of true giving. I remember going to a Christian conference in which a person was guest speaking about his "mission" which in reality was a business that gave the profits to different needs. No major problem with that, in fact it was commendable, but when the slide was shown with him and some members presenting a 6x4 check with the amount in big enough figures for all to see, and making a show out of it, well they obviously did not read verse 3, not only did his left hand know everything he gave, so did everyone else in the room.

Not letting your left hand know what your right hand is doing may have been a saying among the Jews that referred to doing something, without effort or show, perhaps spontaneously. Giving help to those in need should be the normal activity of the Christian, and that it should be done as simply, directly, and discreetly as possible, it is done and forgotten about. All that scheming and all that planning for personal appearance or impression is gone. Jesus's way is giving with no strings attached. It doesn't mean give haphazardly, blindly, without a sense of proper stewardship. It doesn't mean give and take no consideration of the accountability in which the funds should be used. That's not what he's saying, but what Jesus is talking about is: proper motive.

*What constitutes a proper motive?* Proper motive, we give generously, we give quietly, we give privately, we give secretly, we give secretly because God sees all the secrets and rewards openly what has been done privately. That's what it means, that your charitable deed should be in secret meaning, without recognition, and so we give because the God of the Bible is real in our lives.

In reality, it can be very difficult to do everything in secret and the bible doesn't say that if someone finds out then God won't reward us. It's not necessarily about who sees or doesn't see, but it's always a question of motive. With this in mind, there is no contradiction between what is being said here and what Jesus taught earlier in the sermon in Chapter 5:16

- when He said - *'Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven'*.. Because you will note the motive there - so that your good works glorify you father who is in heaven.

A. B. Bruce gives the helpful explanation, *"We are to show when tempted to hide and hide when tempted to show"*

Giving can be a difficult subject as sometimes it feels like we are always being asked to give. Never in the history of the church have Christians been so bombarded with appeals to give money. Many of them to legitimate and worthwhile causes. Knowing how and where to give is sometimes extremely difficult. On the other hand, there can be an attitude that people don't like this subject, and it's an unpopular subject because it's been abused, and often people have the wrong understanding of what it's all about.

The bible is clear that Christians are to give regularly and systematically to the work of their local church. Paul encouraged believers in 1 Corinthians 16:2 *"On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper"*. We are also called to give directly to those in need when we have opportunity and ability but it's not an either/or situation. Both the Old and New Testaments make it clear that willing, generous giving has always characterized the faithful people of God.

God does not need our gifts, because He is entirely sufficient in Himself. The need is on our part and on the part of those we serve in His name. Paul told the Philippian church in Philippians 4:17, *"Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account"*.

Giving is described in the Old Testament as a part of God's cycle of blessing. *"The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered"* (Proverbs 11:25). As we give, God blesses, and when God blesses us, we give again out of what He has given. *"You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give just as the Lord your God blesses you"* (Deuteronomy 16:10).

We are to give freely out of what God has given freely. The cycle applies not only to material giving but to every form of giving that is done sincerely to honour God and to meet need. The way of God's people has always been the way of giving. J Oswald Sanders wrote ***"the basic question is not how much of our money we should give to God but how much of God's money we should keep for ourselves."***

From Scripture we learn of at least seven principles to guide us in non-hypocritical giving.

First - giving from the heart is investing with God. Luke 6:38 tells us - ***"Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return"***.

Paul echoes Jesus' words: ***"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully"*** (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Second - genuine giving is to be sacrificial. David refused to give to the Lord that which cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24). Some think that they should get everything for nothing. Generosity is not measured by the size of the gift itself, but by its size in comparison to what is possessed. The widow who gave two small copper coins to the Temple treasury gave more than all the ***"many rich people who were putting in large sums"*** because ***"they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on"*** (Mark 12:41-44).

Thirdly - responsibility for giving has no relationship to how much a person has. A person who is not generous when he is poor will not be generous if he becomes rich. He might then give a larger amount, but he will not give a larger proportion. ***"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much"*** (Luke 16:10).

It is extremely important to teach children to give generously to the Lord with whatever small amounts of money they get, because the attitudes and patterns they develop as children are likely to be the ones they follow when they are grown. Giving is not a matter of how much money one has but of how much love and care is in the heart.

Fourth - material giving correlates to spiritual blessings. To those who are not faithful with mundane things such as money and other possessions, the Lord will not entrust things that are of far greater value. *“If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own?”* (Luke 16:11-12).

Fifth - giving is to be personally determined. *“Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7). Righteous giving is done from a righteous and generous heart, not from legalistic percentages or quotas. The Macedonian Christians gave abundantly out of their deep financial poverty because spiritually they were rich in love (2 Corinthians 8:1-2). The Philippian believers gave out of the spontaneous generosity of their hearts, not because they felt compelled (Philippians 4:15-18).

Sixth - we are to give in response to need. The early Christians in Jerusalem shared their resources without reservation. Many of their fellow believers had become destitute when they trusted in Christ and were ostracized from their families even lost employment because of their faith. Years later Paul collected money from the Galatian churches to help meet the great needs that continued to exist among the saints in Jerusalem and that had been intensified by famine.

There have always been charlatans who manufacture needs and play on the sympathy of others. And there have always been professional beggars, who are able to work but would rather not. A Christian has no responsibility to support such people and should take reasonable care to determine if and when real need exists before giving his money. *“If anyone will not work,”* Paul says, *“neither let him eat”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Encouraging laziness weakens the character of the one who is lazy and also wastes the Lord’s money. But where real need does exist, our obligation to help meet it, also exists.

Seventh - giving demonstrates love, not law. The New Testament contains no commands for specified amounts or percentages of giving. The percentage we give will be determined by the love of our own hearts and the needs of others.

All of the previous principles point to the obligation to give generously because we are investing in God's work, because we are willing to sacrifice for Him who sacrificed Himself for us, because it has no bearing on how much we have, because we want spiritual riches more than financial riches, because we have personally determined to give, because we want to meet as much need as we can, and because our love compels us to give.

There are three kinds of givers, the Flint, the sponge and the honeycomb giver. To get anything out of a Flint, they hit it with a hammer and then you just get chips and sparks of fire. To get water out of a sponge you squeeze it and the more pressure the more water but the honeycomb just overflows with its own sweetness, so which one are you? Flint, sponge or honeycomb?

As in every area of righteousness, the key is the heart, the inner attitude that motivates what we say and do. Public righteousness is not to be rejected, but it is to be done in the spirit of humility, love, and sincerity. *"For we are God's workmanship,"* Paul reminds us, *"created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10).

Also as in every area of righteousness, Jesus Himself is our supreme and perfect example. He preached His messages in public, He performed His miracles of healing, compassion, and power over nature in public. Yet He continually focused attention on His heavenly Father, whose will alone He came to do (John 5:30; 4:34; 6:38). Even though He was one with the Father, while He lived on earth as a man, Jesus did not seek His own glory but that of His Father (John 8:49-50).

When we give our alms in secret, lovingly, unpretentiously, and with no thought for recognition or appreciation, our Father who sees in secret will repay us. The principle is this: if we remember, God will forget; but if we forget, God will remember. Our purpose should be to meet every need we are able to meet and leave the bookkeeping to God, realizing that *"we have done only that which we ought to have done"* (Luke 17:10).

God will not miss giving a single reward.

***“There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:13).***

The Lord knows our hearts, our attitudes, and our motives, and every reward that is due to us will be given. It is God’s perfect plan and will, to give rewards to those who faithfully trust and obey Him. And it is not unspiritual to expect and anticipate those rewards, if we do so in a spirit of humility and gratitude—knowing that God’s rewards manifest His grace to the undeserving. We can meet His merciful requirements for rewards, but we can never truly earn them.

The greatest reward a believer can have is the knowledge that he has pleased his Lord. Our motive for looking forward to His rewards should be the anticipation of casting them as an offering at His feet, even as the twenty-four elders one day ***“will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power’”*** (Rev. 4:10-11).

It was John Bunyan, author of ‘Pilgrim's progress’ who said ***‘a man there was and they called him mad. The more he gave, the more he had.’***

Spurgeon said quoting John Wesley ***“earn all you can, then give all you can. Never try to save out of God's cause. Such money will canker and rust. Giving to God is no loss.”***

It's putting your substance into the best bank. Giving is true having. As the old gravestone said of the dead man ***‘what I spent I had, what I saved I lost, what I gave I have.’*** You can give without loving but you can't love without giving.

This teaching of Christ came with a warning. *What is the warning?* The warning is do not seek recognition. *Why?* Because God isn't opposed to rewards, they don't bother God. The reality is that the reward will come from either human beings or from God. The Lord isn't opposed to rewards, he is just restricting the place where the reward is to come from. And so, Jesus says *‘take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men look at what it says to be seen by them’*.

*So, where are you going to get your approval from? Are you going to get it from the people who are around you or are you going to get it from the Lord Jesus Christ himself? You know it begs another question, one that many of us are really reluctant to ask and that is *what do you believe about giving?**

Most of us have heard a lot of messages on the subject of giving. For many of you this message, in the middle of this pandemic, couldn't have come at a worse time. You could be facing unemployment, eviction, some other horrible deprivation but contrary to popular belief, it's not a sin to be poor and it's not a sin to suffer the loss of material wealth or material goods. Jesus isn't condemning the poor nor is he seeking to direct the rich.

I suspect most who heard this message that day on the Mount had far more than they needed and they gave far less, and yet, the same is true in our own culture and society.

Most people who hear this messages have far more than they need but give far less than they should but prepare yourself to be surprised. The point of the passage isn't simply to ask you what you believe about giving, it's to reveal the heart of God and the mind of God and the Lord Jesus Christ about this issue.

When Jesus brings up the issue, the very first thing that he points out is that God cares about your heart, and what's going on inside of your heart.

*Amen.*

**Footnotes:**

1. God's people were always instructed by Him to give for example:

Psalm 112:5; Leviticus 25:35-37; Deuteronomy 15:7-8; Deuteronomy 15:13-14; Psalm 41:1-3; Luke 6:37-38; Galatians 6:2; Psalm 119:36; Proverbs 21:13; Proverbs 11:24-25; Proverbs 19:17; Proverbs 22:9; Matthew 10:42; Luke 21:1-4